

and general inaccessibility has helped in preserving the sanctuary. A proposal has been mooted to declare Pakhui a national park.

I have also seen the jaws of several clouded leopards and tigers, a skin and skull of a leopard cat and another stuffed specimen with tribals in this area. Tracks of tigers, leopards and smaller

cats were seen occasionally along trails and on river beds, both in the adjacent reserved forests and in the Sanctuary.

June 29, 1998

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3. DUGONG DUGONG IN THE GULF OF KACHCHH

On February 9, 1998, I conducted my annual "Showing of the Flag" among the islands of the Gulf of Kachchh. At about 1130 h, some 45 minutes walk from the Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad's Nature Education Camp on Beyt, and approaching the rocky reefs and sandbars extending north from the Poshita headland, I saw a brown form outlined below the surface of the crystal clear waters. The sea was calm and the bright sun shining from behind. The animal surfaced to breathe and was close enough for me to hear its breath being released. As the flat snout broke the water, followed by the finless back, it looked strangely like a tiny sperm whale! The animal swam along in bucolic fashion, powered by its horizontal, rounded flukes. We could have approached the creature but I decided not to disturb it. It was a large specimen a little over

3 m, judging from the length of the fishing craft we were in alongside it.

It was in the mid eighties that I had found a dead male dugong in these very waters. Dr. Frazier and two post-graduate students from the Biosciences Department, Saurashtra University, Rajkot were fortuitously my guests and they did a detailed dissection of the carcass. It had drowned, apparently having got entangled in a fishing net. There were deep cuts caused by the nylon meshing.

The continued presence of dugongs in these waters adds to the urgency for careful conservation action, even as the Jamnagar coast is witnessing massive industrial development.

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4. WHITE BISON IN CHINNAR

It was Mr. J.L.H. Williams who first reported the occurrence of white gaur in Manjampatti valley and adjoining areas. During

the 1930's, he had observed in this area several herds of gaur with unusually coloured individuals whose colour ranged from 'light red through dun

to pure white.' Even though the gaur is widely distributed in the Subcontinent, this phenomenon appears to be unique to Manjampatti area. However, since 1940 there have been no reports about these odd coloured gaur. E.R.C. Davidar (1970) set out on a BNHS sponsored mission to find and photograph them, but submitted a negative report. It was presumed that the Rinderpest which ravaged this area had wiped them out.

Recently, two herds of gaur with three greyish white individuals were observed in Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary in Idukki dist., Kerala. Chinnar is contiguous with Manjampatti Valley. On Oct. 21, 1997, at 1810 h, two greyish white gaur, an adult female and a sub-adult were observed on the slopes of Cheevaparamala along with nine other gaur. A juvenile of the same colour was found at Koottar on January 3, 1998 along with five other animals. The typical white stockings are not distinguishable on these greyish

white gaur. Interestingly, the colour of the majority of the animals in these herds ranges from brick red to light red. In the first herd of eleven gaur there were only four normal coloured individuals and in the second herd two, including a magnificent black bull. These herds are extremely wary, and bolt at the first whiff of human scent. This is the first record of White Bison from Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

March 3, 1998

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5. FIVE STRIPED SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS PENNANTI* OBSERVED EATING HONEY

(With one plate)

I had been to Bigwan to photograph flamingoes and on the way to Dalaz No. 2 village, I noticed that on a tall Acacia tree there were three beehives. Two beehives were full of wasps and one beehive was abandoned. To my surprise, I saw a five striped squirrel *Funambulus pennanti* moving up and down the beehive. I watched through my binoculars and to my surprise, I found the squirrel nibbling at the beehive and licking the honey as it started flowing out. It was astonishing that the wasps on the hive and on

the other two beehives did not attack the squirrel. I have read of the honey buzzard, honey bird and the badger eating honey. The above observation could be the first record of a squirrel feeding on honey from a hive with wasps. It is possible that the wasps drove away the bees from the nest

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